

THE

שקל

SHEKEL



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VOLUME XLII No.5 SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2009

THE PORTUGUESE SYNAGOGUE



Painting of the interior of the Esnoga by Emanuel de Witte (c. 1680)

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EDWARD SCHUMAN , Editor

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The President's Message

By Mel Wacks

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

First I want to congratulate our stalwart editor Ed Schuman for achieving 50 years as a member of the American Numismatic Association. And I thank all of our members who sent in their surveys. We have had a strong response, and I greatly appreciate the enthusiasm that our members have shown. I will report back on the results in the next issue of The Shekel, which many of you have indicated you read cover-to-cover.

Two of our officers are having health problems, and I wish Treasurer/Secretary Donna Sims and Vice President J. J. Van Grover quick recoveries.

And now a warning about the ugly scams being perpetrated on unsuspecting victims via mail, telephone and the Internet. I have a good friend who has been taken in by the promise of getting millions of dollars from the estates of long-lost relatives, old bank accounts, etc. in Africa and England. These scam emails go out by the millions, and they must be successful or they would stop. Just use your common sense – that you don't get something for nothing.

Another scam are the ads on television and newspapers telling you that buyers of old gold jewelry, watches, coins, etc. will be staying in a hotel in your town. You will undoubtedly get much better prices if you visit a few coin dealers or jewelers in your area and ask them for their best offer on your things. You can sell to the dealer offering the highest price, or if you are not satisfied don't sell to anyone.

If you see a full page ad in a newspaper or magazine or if you receive a telephone call offering a hot numismatic investment, first call some coin dealers and ask what they would charge for these items. In any case, I would not recommend that you buy from anyone touting coins as an investment. Buy coins because you enjoy them for their history and artistry; if they turn out to be a good investment that's an unexpected dividend.

If you ever have a question about buying or selling coins please call me at (818) 225-1348 or email me at ainapresident@lycos.com. My opinion is free and it could save you a lot.

Happy collecting,



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The Editor's Page

By Edward Schuman

It's been a year of dramatic change for our hobby. You have probably experienced some kind of change in your life as well. We cannot predict what the numismatic market will bring, but we can tell you this. We will continue to bring you interesting and unusual Judaica topics for you to read in the Shekel magazine six times a year.

Our printer wishes to apologize for omitting a page in the July-August issue of the Shekel. Error's due happen especially when the proof reader is asleep. Unfortunately I did not receive my copy of the magazine until after it was mailed and then it was too late to correct the mistake. I have repeated the article in this issue. Several members have telephoned me to report the error.

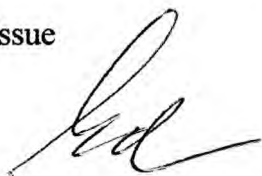
The Jewish American Hall of Fame, created by A.I.N.A.'s president is now 40 years old. This is quite an achievement as there have not been many medal series that have achieved this longevity. A wooden nickel has been made to commemorate this event. Mel Wacks should be congratulated for his project.

The editor has continued his articles on "In Search of Judaica Rarities", numismatic items we have collected over the years. Michael Mooney found an article in Haaretz, the Israeli newspaper that we have reprinted. This only adds credence to my beliefs about Israeli rarities and how they are created.

AINA member Stephen Fregger is the recipient of the Ben and Sylvia Odesser Memorial Award for his unique article "A Young Girls Necklace" which appeared in the September October 2008 issue of the Shekel. Congratulations.

There are two articles by AINA members of their personal experiences which we have printed. Your editor also wishes to thank Donna Sims, Marvin Tameanko, and Mel Wacks for their repeated contributions to the magazine. It makes my job that much easier.

Till the next issue



THE PORTUGUESE ISRAELITE SYNAGOGUE IN AMSTERDAM

In 1492 Spain expelled its Jewish population. Many who fled to Portugal were nevertheless forcibly baptized after 1496. More than 100 years later, their descendants - victims of the Inquisition who wished to live as Jews - began to arrive in Amsterdam. At that time the Dutch Republic was at war with Spain, so to avoid being identified with the Spanish enemy these refugees from the Iberian peninsula called themselves 'Portuguese' Jews.

During the 17th century large numbers of Ashkenazi Jews arrived from Central and Eastern Europe. They soon formed the largest Jewish community in Amsterdam and Holland. There were originally three Sephardi communities: the first, Beth Jacob, already existed in 1610, and perhaps as early as 1602; Neve Shalom was founded between 1608 and 1612 by Jews of Spanish origin. The third community, Beth Israel, was established in 1618. These three communities began co-operating more closely in 1622. Eventually, in 1639, they merged to form Talmud Torah, the Portuguese Jewish Community of Amsterdam which still exists today

Portuguese Jews played a significant part in the cultural and economic development of the Dutch Republic. Moreover, they enjoyed a freedom of religion unique in Jewish history. The community produced rabbis, scholars, philosophers, artists, bankers as well as founders and trustees of major international commercial companies.

The site of the present synagogue (the Esnoga or Snoge), built within an existing courtyard, was acquired on 12 December 1670. Construction work began on 6 Iyar 5431 (17 April 1671) under architect Elias Bouwman. Work came to a halt early in 1672, the so-called year of disaster, until 27 May 1674. The total cost of the building was 186,000 florins, a king's ransom in those days but a small price to pay for the city's Jewish community, whose members could worship openly for the first time in 200 years. When completed, the Portuguese Synagogue was the largest synagogue in the world.

On 10 Menachem 5435 (2 August 1675) the Synagogue was solemnly inaugurated. Above the entrance the date 1672 is inscribed in gilt Hebrew lettering as this was the year the building was supposed to have been ready. The text is taken from Psalm 5, verse 8: *'In the*

abundance of Thy loving kindness will I come into Thy house' (Bishenat va'ani berob chasdecha abo beetécha lif'k). According to Jewish tradition the appropriate letters are marked with a so-called perat katan, signifying the year. The last words of the verse also contain the name Aboab, that of the chief rabbi, or chacham, whose initiative it was to build the synagogue.

In accordance with the Shulchan Aruch ruling (Yoreh De'ah 286;3) the synagogue does not have a mezuzah since it does not contain a residence. The layout is of the longitudinal Iberian-Sephardi type with the Hechal (Ark) and tebah (bimah) at opposite ends of the interior, while the seating is divided into two equal halves facing one another and separated by an aisle. The floor is covered with fine sand, in the old Dutch fashion, to absorb dust, moisture and dirt from shoes and to muffle the noise.

The building rests on wooden piles and the foundation vaults can be viewed by boat from the water underneath the synagogue. Around the main edifice a row of low buildings house the winter synagogue, offices and archives, homes of various officials, the rabbinate, a mortuary and the world-famous Ets Haim library. The courtyard enclosed by these buildings serves both as a safe playground for the children and a place for adults to walk and talk.

Over the years minor alterations and renovations have taken place, but the building's character has never been lost. In 1773/74 the entrance to the women's gallery and one of the corridors at the back was radically changed; between 1852 and 1854 the small leaded lights were replaced by cast-iron windows and a vestibule with swing doors was added at the front. The women's gallery is supported by 12 stone columns to represent the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Two large brass chandeliers hold a total of 1,000 candles, all of which are lit during worship services.

During the 1955-1959 renovation the former Ets Haim seminary auditorium was redesigned as a winter synagogue with central heating and electric lighting. The benches were taken from a synagogue originally built in 1639 and the Hechal dates from 1744. Services are held here from Shabbath Bereshit to Shabbath ha-Gadol.

When Nazi Germany invaded Holland in 1940 there were around 140,000 Jews living here, some 120,000 of whom lived in Amsterdam; of these about 4,300 were Sephardi Jews. Miraculously, the synagogue survived the Nazi invasion unscathed. It is still not known why it was left intact when virtually all other synagogues were destroyed. After the war there were only some 20,000 Jews left in Holland, about 800 of

whom were Sephardi. At present there are between 20,000 and 25,000 Jews in Holland, around 15,000 to 20,000 of whom in Amsterdam. The Portuguese Jewish community has about 600 contributing members who live, like most of the Ashkenazi community, outside the city centre.

To commemorate the 200th Anniversary of the Synagogue a medal was struck to honor the occasion. All known copies were struck in bronze or copper as the illustrated medal. It is believed that copies exist that were struck in silver which were presented to dignitaries of the Synagogue at that time.



THE LOST TREASURE OF 20 AGOROT AND 2 SHEKEL COINS

By Tal Levy

submitted by Michael Mooney

Where oh where have they gone? Three coins of 20 agorot apiece and five coins of two shekels apiece, of styles that never made it into circulation, have gone missing. Put otherwise, Avia Spivak, formerly a deputy governor of the central bank, had been given sample coins for inspection ahead of minting, but subsequently couldn't find them.

The story began in 2003, when the Bank of Israel decided to mint two-shekel coins. It ordered several dozen sample styles in order to choose one. All differ from the coin finally issued at the end of December 2007. The central bank also ordered a small number of 20 agorot coins for examination: No coin of that denomination ever did make it into circulation.

These coins are considered collectors' items and are worth thousands of shekels per coin.

The coins were disseminated among top Bank of Israel people for inspection, yet several never made their way back into the bank vault. Spivak cannot locate the ones that were lent to him. The Bank of Israel elected not to take steps against him, and the other coins have apparently been melted down. (*Editor's note: Wanna Bet*)

The Bank of Israel stated that Spivak had been given 13 two-shekel coins and 13 20-agorot coins for inspection. Before he retired from the central bank, he was asked to return them. He returned all but five two-shekel coins and three 20-agorot coins. The Bank of Israel accepted his explanation, that they had been misplaced with no premeditated malice, and adds that it won't be minting more sample coins in the future.

Editor's note: I will not dispute Mr. Spivak's word that he misplaced 8 out of the 26 valuable Israel pattern coins which were lent to him for examination, nor that other officials of the Bank of Israel likewise are guilty for doing same thing. However, it is a known fact that most, if not all Israeli numismatic rarities are created when a unique missing coin or unique paper money end up in private hands and are sold to collectors at high prices.

IN SEARCH OF JUDAICA RARITIES #3

By Edward Schuman

As I have written previously, most Israeli numismatic rarities are a result of an individual having sticky fingers and not doing the job they were employed to do. A classic example in American numismatics is the case of the 1933 United States \$20 gold piece. Due to the 1933 gold act, which prohibited individual ownership of gold except for jewelry, the entire mintage was to be melted down. Prior to melting, the coins were weighed. After the melt the gold bullion weighed exactly the same amount. Someone threw a few gold pieces of a different date in the melt and illegally took out the 1933 coins. One sold for over 7 million dollars. But here is the story of my judaica rarity

On one of the early A I N A tours to Israel, after having dinner in the Sheraton Hotel in Tel-Aviv we wandered into the lobby. The usual group of vest pocket dealers were present eager to sell numismatic items to the American collector. After surveying the coins and paper money of the dealers in the room, one mentioned to me that he could get the rarest of the rare, but it would be expensive. I expressed interest and we made a date to meet the next day.

What he showed me was at that time an unbelievable find. A set of four banknotes, printed for the Anglo Palestine Bank Ltd., that were never put into circulation. The asking price was in the four figures and the negotiations began. Of course I was interested and I was able to offer my personal check in payment as I was well known. Florence, my wife almost killed me. Now for the story.

S.. Hoofian was sent to the United States in 1948 to persuade the American Bank Note Company to print currency notes for a government as yet without a name. Time was very important. The British were pulling out of Palestine and taking their money with them. It was urgent that the new State have suitable currency for every day business transactions.

The delays in getting the American Bank Note Company to design and print the banknotes were causing much concern in Israel. A secret secondary plan had to be made. At the Shoshani Printing Company, in Tel-Aviv, using check stock paper in various colors, as bank note paper was not available, four denominations of bank notes were printed. A 500 mils, one, five and ten pound notes. These followed the existing Palestine Currency Board notes. Only the 50 and 100 pound notes were missing. And who knows maybe these will also turn up one day. It is not known where these were stored and who was responsible for their safety.

The American Bank Notes did arrive in time and the task of then destroying all of the check paper notes began. We now know that perhaps several dozen sets exist as a result of someone with sticky fingers.

The set I purchased is unusual in that the notes bear a rubber stamp with Hebrew letters meaning cancelled diagonally across each note. If the notes were to be destroyed, either by burning or shredding it would not be necessary to stamp them first. A possible explanation is that whoever took these notes was fearful of being caught and stamped the word cancelled on the face of the notes which was to mean they had no value. In his mind this would lessen the penalty if caught. The banknotes all have different serial numbers.

Today an occasional note, when offered for sale, usually brings big money. The cost of the set I owned was \$10,000... The set is now in the numismatic collection of the Jewish Museum in New York City where my wife and I donated it.



The original photocopy of the 500 mils banknote of The Anglo Palestine Bank Ltd. in actual size.

N: 221999

תל-אביב. ד אייר התש"ח
16 מאי 1948

בנק אנגלו-פלשתינה בערבון מוגבל

بنك الانجلو فلسطين محدود الضمان • THE ANGLO-PALESTINE BANK LIMITED



ש"ס למוכ"ז אר"י
עשר לירות אר"י
TEN PALESTINE POUNDS
عشرة جنيهات فلسطينية



בפקודת ההנהלה
בנק אנגלו-פלשתינה בערבון מוגבל

G. P. A.

N: 221999

N: 400998

תל-אביב. ד אייר התש"ח
16 מאי 1948

בנק אנגלו-פלשתינה בערבון מוגבל

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בפקודת ההנהלה
בנק אנגלו-פלשתינה בערבון מוגבל

G. P. A.

N: 400998

N: 895998 ב

תל-אביב. ד אייר התש"ח
16 מאי 1948

בנק אנגלו-פלשתינה בערבון מוגבל

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לירה אר"י אחת
ONE PALESTINE POUND
جنيه فلسطيني واحد



בפקודת ההנהלה
בנק אנגלו-פלשתינה בערבון מוגבל

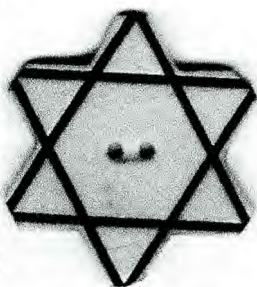
G. P. A.

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The Yellow Star of Hope

By Neil Glick

In September 1994, while traveling, I had two layovers in Sofia, Bulgaria. Sofia was my transit point for my vacation from my then home of Moscow, Russia to Greece. On my way back to Moscow, I would be celebrating Rosh Hashanah in Sofia, so I looked for the Jewish community to learn about services.



I found my way to the great Synagogue of Sofia. It is built in a Moorish style and has an incredible main dome, with little domes all around. The interior was under complete reconstruction at the time. Not many American Jewish tourists appeared in Bulgaria during the period after the fall of Communism. My fluent Russian facilitated making my way in the Synagogue and in Sofia in general. After two minutes, I got an impromptu meeting with the President of the Community. He was an older Gentleman who was so warm and friendly. He was probably in his 70's and we both spoke in Russian, which like Bulgarian is a Slavic language. I told him that I would be in Sofia for Rosh Hashanah, and asked to participate in their service. I was warmly welcomed. Since the Synagogue was under reconstruction, services would be in a small chapel across from the office. "Get here early – the seats will quickly be filled!" he said.

After my trip to Greece, I arrived in Sofia early in the day. I walked around central Sofia and came upon a small antique store. One item quickly caught my eye - a small shiny yellow Mogen David – a Jewish star. It was larger than a quarter and smaller than a half dollar. It looked like it was bake-lite on wood. The label on the item said "Igrushka" which translated to "toy" or "game." I knew the history of yellow stars, and thought it might be a hat badge for the Jewish Ghetto Police or Judenrat during the War. The clerk did not what it was. She told me that it was from a game of some sort. The price was the equivalent of \$8.00. I bought it and put it in my pocket.

A few hours later I got to the Synagogue early for services. The President of the Community saw me, and we greeted each other. Then I pulled out the yellow star, and asked if he knew what it was. His jovial face changed to a worn look in an instant. "This is what I wore during the War. I wore mine right here as a boy" and he pointed to his left breast. The star had two small holes in the middle so it could be sewn on, like a button.

Now realizing the gravity of the meaning of this little yellow star, I asked "what happened here during the war?" like a child asking his grandfather why he had numbers tattooed on his arm, anticipating a sad answer. Growing up, I read copious stories about the Holocaust, but the Jews of Bulgaria never stuck out in my mind. So much about life behind the Iron Curtain was not taught to children growing up during the Cold War.

The President told me the greatest story that I never heard from the Holocaust. Bulgaria voluntarily joined the Axis powers and strongly supported Nazi Germany. In 1941, Bulgaria passed laws similar to the Nuremberg Laws: stripping Jews of citizenship; banning intermarriage; and not allowing Jews to practice certain professions. But this was not a nation with a history of anti-Semitism. The 50,000 Jews of Bulgaria were an integral part of the country.

The Nazis demanded that all Jews be rounded up and shipped off to eminent death. When it came time to round up Bulgarian Jews, there was a huge protest by all levels of society, from the Government; to literary circles and artists; to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church; to the Bulgarian people. The protests, though quick, did not save the Jews of Thrace and Macedonia. Over 12,000 non-Bulgarian Jews living in those newly annexed Bulgarian territories were deported to concentration camps.

Jews were forced to live in Ghettos, and forced to wear this little yellow star. But the people of Bulgaria did not allow anyone to kill, or deport, their fellow Bulgarian citizens who were Jewish. Life was not easy for Jews in Bulgaria – food was scarce and Jews did perform backbreaking labor. Nevertheless, the Jews of Bulgaria stayed and lived in Bulgaria, even as the Nazi's controlled their nation. Words could not express what I learned from this survivor of World War II. I was on the verge of tears. I looked at my star, and held it tight in my hand. I learned that an entire nation of Jews survived the Holocaust in their own country; saved by their fellow citizens. It was a bewildering thought for me, since so many from my family did not survive World War II.

I went to join the Jews of Sofia, Bulgaria in prayer to welcome in a New Year. This New Year gave me a new meaning on the yellow star. This was not a yellow star representing hate, injustice, intolerance and murder. This yellow star represents the best and brightest golden light of humanity during the darkest hour of history. It shows when people stand up to pure evil, they can succeed and they can win. This represents the zenith of the human spirit. This is the Yellow Star of Hope.

Coin Hunting at the Center of the Universe

By Robert Messing, AINA LM 38

When I was Israel during Passover 2008, I spent two days at the Temple Mount Sifting Project in Jerusalem. I was able to sort through artifacts that had been taken from the Temple Mount in search of coins and treasures from the past. I became part of the first archaeological project that has EVER examined artifacts from the Temple Mount.

The story begins in October, 1999, when the Islamic Wakf, the Moslem trust, conducted an illegal and archeologically damaging construction operation on the south-east corner of the Temple Mount. During this operation, 10,000 tons of rubble, bursting with archeological wealth relevant to Jewish, Christian and Moslem history, was removed by heavy machinery and unceremoniously dumped by trucks into the nearby Kidron Valley.

Starting in November, 2004, Bar Ilan University archeology professor Dr. Gabriel Barkay and a small team, led by his former student Zachi Zweig, transferred 68 truckloads of the rubble saturated with archaeological finds from the garbage dump to the Emek Zurim National Park and began the first examination of this holy soil.

The extraordinary significance of this project is because the Temple Mount, also known as Har Habyit and Mount Moriah, is the theological, national, cultural epicenter of the Jewish people. This is the place that King David purchased from Ornan, the city's former Jebusite king in the eleventh century BCE. It is described in the Bible, 1 Chronicles 21:25, *"So David paid Ornan for the site 600 shekels' worth of gold."* It was on this site that King Solomon, David's son, built the first Temple in the tenth century, BCE. This temple was destroyed in 586 BCE by the Babylonians.

The second temple was rebuilt on the same site in 516 BCE under the leadership of Ezra and then renovated and enlarged by Herod the Great in 20 BCE. The second temple was destroyed in 70 CE by the Romans. Since that time, Jews have had no or limited access to the Temple Mount. Even today, during "open" days, Jews and Christian are allowed to ascend the Temple Mount, but only if they conform to a strict set of Wakf guidelines, which includes demands that they not pray or bring any "holy objects" to the site.

The area of the Temple Mount Sifting Project is better known to many by the New Testament Name of the Valley of Jehosephat. It is located between Mount Scopus and the Mount of Olives and commands

a lovely view of the Temple Mount. While the work that I did was simple, the experience was exhilarating. It began when I chose a bucket filled with material taken from the Temple Mount that had been soaking in water. I spilled the material onto a metal screen and then used a hose to meticulously wash off the mud from the material. Then with great expectations, I began to scan the material for treasures. Since I was looking at debris that came from underneath both Temples, the possibilities were unlimited. I was certain that I would find pieces of weapons that were used by Jews to fight the Babylonians or the Romans, ancient coins or even one of the 12 gems from the High Priest's golden breastplate. Each bucket that I dumped onto the screen was like a gambler rolling the dice. I had another chance to "hit the archeological jackpot." Like most gamblers, I never hit the jackpot. But unlike most gamblers, I left a winner. For two days, I was physically connected to this wonderful and holy place that was, and remains, a vital part of our history and culture. Although I found no coins, I did find bits of Roman glass and mosaic, old pottery and many bone fragments. (Part of Temple service performed by the priests consisted of daily animal sacrifices.) I also had the opportunity to meet and talk with the director, Zachi Zweig.

It is interesting that the idea of the Temple Mount Sifting Project was movingly expressed in the Book of Psalms:

"Thou wilt arise, and have compassion upon Zion; for it is time to be gracious unto her, for the appointed time is come: For Thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and love her dust." (Psalms 102: 14-15)

Note to visitors to Israel - This project is not performed by a small clique of archaeologists. This project depends on volunteers' participation. I would strongly urge you to volunteer for this remarkable experience. You can spend just a few hours or days at the site. You get the opportunity to meet people from all over Israel and all over the world. It could turn out to be one of the highlights of your life. (For additional information, Google "Temple Mount Sifting Project.")



New Facts Uncovered about the First American Jewish Medal

An extensively researched article by Mel Wacks in the Spring 2009 issue of *The Medal*, published by the British Art Medal Trust in Association with the *Fédération Internationale de la Médaille d'Art* (FIDEM), reveals that almost all commonly accepted truths about the first American Jewish medal, are mistaken. The medal, by Moritz Fürst, honors Gershom Mendes Seixas (1745-1816) who was minister of Shearith Israel, the Spanish-Portuguese Congregation in New York and a trustee of Columbia College.

The original obverse die is in the collection of the American Jewish Historical Society, and the only original specimen is in the Columbia University Archives. It was commonly held that the medal was commissioned by Columbia in 1816 as a memorial to its long-time trustee (serving from 1787-1815). Wacks shows that the dies were in existence at least four years before Seixas' death. "The proceedings of the American Philosophical Society state that on Feb. 7, 1812 "M*-Seixas presented an impression in paper of a die cut by Fürst in this city, of his father Gershom M. Seixas, on account of its superior execution." And debunking the theory that Columbia had commissioned the medal, is the fact that it was not in their collection until it was donated by Judaica collector Harry Friedman in November, 1933 as attested to by a letter in the Columbia University Archives.

Lastly, and perhaps most interestingly, a comparison of the original die and the unique Columbia University specimen reveals that an inscription was hand engraved on the medal above the portrait after the die had been made, stating: "BORN JANUARY 14TH, 1745 GERSHOM MENDES SEIXAS DIED JULY 2ND, 1816."

Information about subscriptions to *The Medal* can be obtained at www.bams.org.uk or by writing *The Medal*, c/o Department of Coins and Medals, British Museum, London, England WC1B 3DG.

The following are pictures of a silver restrike made from the die in the collection of the American Jewish Historical Society (Courtesy of the American Jewish Historical Society), and the unique original inscribed medal in the Columbia University Archives (With permission of the University Archives, Columbia University in the City of New York)

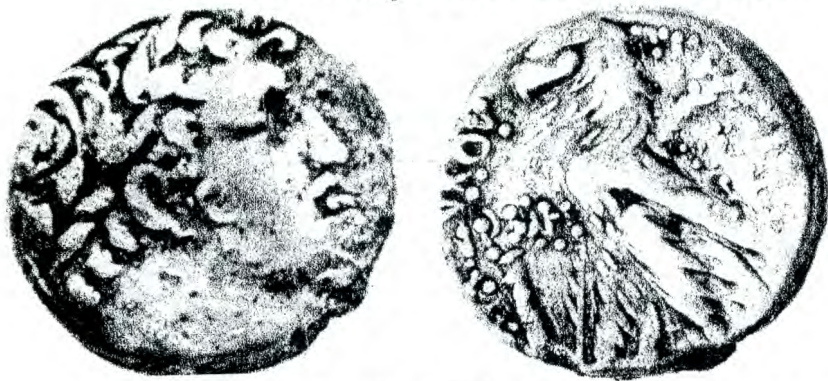


The unique original inscribed medal in the Columbia University Archives (With permission of the University Archives, Columbia University in the City of New York)



A silver restrike made from the die in the collection of the American Jewish Historical Society (Courtesy of the American Jewish Historical Society)

A Silver Coin that Was Used to Pay the Half Shekel Head-Tax to the Temple Found in Jerusalem



Before reading the Scroll of Esther, many devout Jews contribute a sum of money – “a reminder of the half shekel” – which is a tradition that took root in the wake of the ancient virtuous deed of paying a tax of one half shekel to the Temple. This sum, which was used in the past for the establishment and maintenance of the temple, is translated into a contemporary amount and donated to the needy. In an archaeological excavation that is being conducted in the main drainage channel of Jerusalem from the time of the Second Temple, in the City of David, in the Walls around Jerusalem National Park, an ancient rare silver coin was discovered in 2008. This coin is a shekel denomination that was customarily used to pay a half shekel head-tax in the Second Temple period.

The excavations, directed by Eli Shukron of the Israel Antiquities Authority and Professor Ronny Reich of the University of Haifa, are being conducted on behalf of the Israel Antiquities Authority, the Nature and Parks Authority and the ‘Ir David Foundation. Archaeologist Eli Shukron estimates that, “Just like today when coins sometimes fall from our pockets and roll into drainage openings at the side of the street, that’s how it was some two thousand years ago – a man was on his way to the Temple and the shekel which he intended to use for paying the half shekel head-tax found its way into the drainage channel”.

The origin of the commandment to pay the half shekel head-tax to the Temple is in the weekly Biblical reading “Ki Tisa”, in the Book of Exodus: “When you take the census of the people of Israel, then each shall give a ransom for himself to the Lord when you number them... half a shekel...the rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less...and you shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel and shall appoint it for the service of the tent of meeting; that it may

bring the people of Israel to remembrance before the Lord, so as to make atonement for yourselves”.

At the time of the temple's construction, every Jew was commanded to make an obligatory donation of a half shekel to the edifice. This modest sum allowed all Jews, of all economic levels, to participate in the building the Temple. After the construction was completed, they continued to collect the tax from every Jew for the purpose of purchasing the public sacrifices and renewing the furnishings of the Temple. The collection occurred every year on the first day of the month of Adar when the “heralding of the shekalim” took place, that is to say the beginning of the collection of the money and it ended on the first day of the month of Nissan, when ‘there is a new budget’ in the Temple and the purchase of public sacrifices was renewed.

It was most likely a shekel of Tyre that Jesus and Peter used to pay the Temple head tax (a half shekel each): “Go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money. That take, and give unto them for me and thee” (Matthew 17:27). Moreover, Tyrian silver coins probably comprised the infamous payment to Judas Iscariot, when “they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver” (Matthew 26:15).

The annual half shekel head-tax was donated in shekels and half shekels from the Tyre mint where they were struck from the year 125 BCE until the outbreak of the Great Revolt in 66 CE. At the time of the uprising, the tax was paid using Jerusalem shekalim, which were specifically struck for this purpose. In the rabbinic sources, the Tosefta (Ketubot 13:20) states “Silver mentioned in the Pentateuch is always Tyrian silver: What is Tyrian silver? It is Jerusalemite.” Many have interpreted this to mean that only Tyrian shekalim could be used to pay the half shekel head-tax at the Jerusalem temple.

The shekel that was found in the excavation weighs 13 grams, bears the head of Melqart, the chief deity of the city of Tyre on the obverse (equivalent to the Semitic god Baal) and an eagle upon a ship's prow on the reverse. The coin was struck in the year 22 CE.

Despite the importance of the half-shekel head-tax for the economy of Jerusalem in the Second Temple period, only seven other Tyrian shekalim and half shekalim were heretofore found in the excavations in Jerusalem.

HOW ELECTRICITY BEGAN IN PALESTINE

The production of electricity in Palestine for illumination and its utilization for the public dates only from the last quarter of the 19th century. By 1890, electric lighting had been installed at the Rishon Lezion winery, which had began partial operations, but the power originated neither from a power plant nor a generator but in an array of batteries. The initiative came from Baron Edmond de Rothschild, who in addition to his widespread efforts and support for the Zionist enterprise in Palestine, was an enthusiastic follower of the latest technological developments.

An electrical generator accompanied the German Kaiser Wilhelm II when he and his large entourage visited Palestine in 1898 and set up camp in Jerusalem and elsewhere, enabling the country's inhabitants to witness at first-hand the wonders and benefits of electricity. Electric lights were installed in Augusta Victoria, the castle-like structure, later to become a hospital, which the Kaiser built on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem and named after the Empress.

The electricity for the first moving-picture houses that had opened in Palestine between 1910 and 1912, first in Jerusalem and then in Tel Aviv, came from small generators. After the war, and especially in the aftermath of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the hopes it aroused in the yishuv and among world Jewry in general, Jewish interest in Palestine grew and ways were sought to accelerate the country's economic and technological development. The production and use of electric power was seen as one of the key elements toward achieving that goal.

In 1919, an engineer, Pinhas Rutenberg, born in Ukraine in 1879, who had been active in the Russian Revolution and afterwards in the Zionist movement, arrived in Palestine. After making widespread surveys, he submitted a proposal to establish 13 hydroelectric power stations with a total capacity of 548,000 horsepower. His plan, which encompassed not only Western Palestine but also Transjordan and much of Syria and Lebanon, was ahead of its time.

In 1921, with the active assistance of the Zionist leadership, public figures, and private capital, Rutenberg was granted a concession from the British mandatory government to generate electricity by harnessing the Yarkon River near the growing city of Tel Aviv. Shortly afterwards, he received an assurance that he could also exploit all the running water in western Palestine, including that of the Jordan.

Prior to the First World War, the Turkish authorities had granted a franchise to utilize the Yarkon to generate electricity for Jerusalem to a Greek named Fukiya. However, he died before he could implement his plan and the concession passed to another Greek, named Mavromatis, who did not take it up. When Rutenberg was awarded the concession, Mavromatis sued, hoping to be granted compensatory payment and a waiver fee. The suit reached the International Court of Justice in The Hague, which ruled that his right to produce electricity applied only to Jerusalem. By the end of 1925 the modification of his concession was accomplished and accordingly assigned to the Jerusalem Electric & Public Service Corporation.



In March, 1926, he was granted the concession for the utilization of the Jordan River and for the supply of electricity throughout Palestine, other than Jerusalem. He devised a new plan which he believed was more realistic with respect to the conditions of time and place, topography and possibilities for power generation. The site he chose was the confluence of the river Yarmuk with the Jordan, of which it forms the major tributary, and potentially the greatest source of power that could be produced by harnessing Palestine's running waters. Moreover, the flow of the Jordan could be regulated by partially blocking and storing its waters in the Sea of Galilee during the rainy

winter season when water was abundant, and then releasing these reserves in the summer. Topography and geography combined to suggest a name for the site: Naharayim ("Two Rivers").

Ground work began in 1927, including the re-aligning of the riverbed to accommodate the power plant and its facilities. The project gave employment to a large body of workers - some 3,000 worked there during the five years of construction, which coincided with severe economic depression and rampant unemployment throughout the country, jobs which lasted until almost the end of 1931.

The amount of water that passes through the Jordan and Yarmuk is not constant: the torrents of a rainy winter inevitably give way to the shallow streams of the dry summers. The Sea of Galilee, therefore, made a natural storage reservoir for the Jordan's waters. By using dams to regulate the flow of the water out of the lake on its journey southward, an optimal amount of water could be assured for the turbines. This was not possible with the Yarmuk, other than storage for a brief period in a small artificial lake.

The first facility of the complex was a dam which also served as a bridge over the Jordan, at the point where its waters spilled out of the Sea of Galilee on their way south. The Degania Dam, as it is known, is adjacent to the bridge which forms part of the road leading from Tiberias to the Jordan Valley. The purpose of the dam was to regulate the flow of the Jordan River waters in accordance with the amount needed to activate the power plant. This was followed by the eight-metre-high Dalhamiya Dam (north of Kibbutz Ashdot-Ya'akov) by means of which a broad, deep channel was created for the Jordan, forming a flowing serpentine reservoir, three kilometres long, with a capacity of 60 cubic metres of water per second.

The third element was a dam over the Yarmuk, 14 metres high, which blocked the flow of the river not far from its natural spill into the Jordan and created an artificial lake covering 300 acres. Eight hundred cubic metres of water a second could pass through each of the dam's two sluice gates. The water of the Jordan was turned on its heels, as it were, and its waters merged with those of the Yarmuk.

On 6 June 1933, the Naharayim power plant was dedicated in a festive ceremony, with the nominal owner, Emir Abdullah, the ruler of Transjordan, raising the lever that activated the turbines. The station, which during its existence was the only hydro-electric plant in Palestine, had an effective capacity of 25,500 hp. This was 16-17 times as much as the initial capacity of the Palestine Electric Corporation's first three power plants combined.

Within two or three years Naharayim was supplying more than three-quarters of the total power generated by the Palestine Electric Corporation. But as time passed and the country experienced rapid industrial development, Naharayim's share of power production gradually declined. The original hope - for the plant to generate 150 million kilowatt hours of electricity a year - did not materialize; the actual figure was between 50 and 64 million kwh. In the absence of water sources in sufficient amounts, the Electric Corporation turned to steam-driven turbines. The first such plant, with a capacity of 30,000 kws, or slightly less than twice that of Naharayim, was dedicated in Haifa in 1935. In 1938, the first turbine (also steam-driven), with a capacity of 12,000 kws, went into operation at the Reading Power Station in Tel Aviv.

The years that followed, and particularly the period of World War II, saw a rapid increase in electricity consumption in Palestine. In 1945, for example, consumers purchased 216 million kwh, and Naharayim's contribution to the country's electricity production that year was at most 25 percent. This decreased even further when the Reading Power Station put another steam-driven turbine into operation.

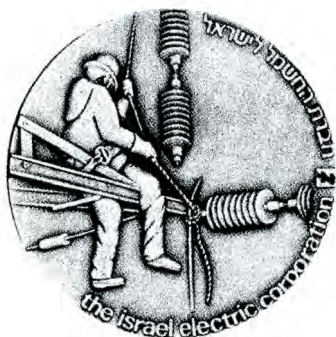
One day before the declaration of the State of Israel on 14 May 1948, Iraqi forces seized Naharayim and the power plant ceased to operate. To prevent Iraqi tanks from crossing the Jordan and attacking the Jewish settlement in the Jordan Valley, the order was given to open the sluice gates of the Degania dam. The resulting rush of water, which also deepened the river at this crucial location, blocked the enemy's attempted breakthrough and prevented an Iraqi-Jordanian incursion into the Jordan Valley. This was the last service performed by the Naharayim power plant.

The plant's closure cost the infant state slightly more than 18,000 kws (about 20 percent) of its electrical power. Only the activation of a third steam-driven turbine at Reading and the severance from the system of consumers who were now outside the boundaries of the new state, prevented a large-scale technical-economic breakdown which would have been caused by a country-wide power shortage. Within a short time the building of Reading C and the expansion of the other plants brought about new momentum in Israel's production of electricity. The inclusion of the Jerusalem power plant and the building of a new plant at Ashdod and a major installation west of Hadera which uses coal-fired steam-driven turbines, has ensured a continuous increase in the capacity of the Electric Corporation.

Today, Israel's power plants generate over 8,300 megawatts. The current capacity, therefore, is more than 460 times that of the Naharayim turbines. Following the signing of the peace agreement between Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, most of the area of Naharayim was returned to Jordanian sovereignty. On a hill top overlooking the plant, the Jordanian army set up a military presence, ironically dubbed "Island of Peace," and the area was visited by many Israelis as visible evidence of the peace process. This idyll was shattered in May 1996, when a deranged Jordanian soldier (subsequently imprisoned for life) started shooting at a bus load of young Israeli girls from Beit Shemesh on a school trip, seven of whom were killed. However, since that tragedy, the site once again attracts many thousands of visitors.

The Rutenberg Power Station at Ashkelon is Israel's second coal-fueled and first all-Israeli-planned station. It is a landmark in the history of electric power in Israel. Construction began in 1983. This is Israel's second coal-fueled station. Since the Israel Electric corporation was founded in 1923 it has grown with the Jewish State, beginning with a diesel generator, followed by the hydroelectric plant at Naharaim (which fell under Jordanian control in 1948), thermal stations at Haifa, the Reding station at Tel Aviv, Eshkol at Ashdod, Meor David at Hedera and now this new Rutenberg Station with two 550 MW production units. Its huge investments have made the Israel Electric Corp. a major national economic force.

The obverse of the Rutenberg Power Station Medal shows the power station near Ashkelon and the words "Rutenberg Power Station" in Hebrew and English to the left. Around the circumference, the biblical passage "HIS LIGHTNING TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH" and the source, 'JOB 37:3" in Hebrew and English. Below, the year "1990 5750". The reverse portrays a company employee at work. Around the circumference, the words "The Israel Electric Corporation" in Hebrew and English.



PROFILE OF A SCIENTIST

Saul Needleman was born in the Chicago area 82 years ago, growing up in the Humboldt Park neighborhood. His mother, Celia, was born in a suburb of Kiev, Ukrainia and his father, Jack, was born in a shtelt across the river from Warsaw, Poland. His father came to this country when he was five years old and his mother, when she was 21. Saul's father opened the Needleman English Academy in Havana, Cuba where he met Celia, one of his students, waiting for entry into the United States. Saul and his wife, Sondra, have been married for 55 years and have four children.

At the age of 17, Saul enlisted in the Navy during WWII as an aviation cadet. Following his discharge, he entered Illinois Institute of Technology, completing the B.S. and M.S. programs in Chemistry and Biochemistry. He then entered Northwestern University Medical School and obtained a Ph.D. in Molecular Biology and a degree in Medicine. Concurrent with being on the faculty of the Medical School for 20 years, he became Chief of Nuclear Medicine in the V.A. hospital associated with NU. He was Head of the Clinical Diagnostics Division at Abbott Laboratories for ten years and Scientific Director of the Navy Drug Screening Laboratories at Great Lakes, Illinois, for ten years until his retirement in 1995.

Saul has published more than 125 scientific papers in biochemical and other scientific journals relating to his research and more than 25 articles in *The American Society of Forensic Medicine Journal* on drug addiction and identification. Saul was a member of the Board of Directors of the American Chemical Society, Chicago Division, as well as a member of other professional societies. He has testified as a professional expert witness in over 200 court trials dealing with drug use and addiction. Saul was honored by the Russian Academy of Science when he was awarded a citation for his work in elucidating the cause of a genetic disease.

Saul has been a lifelong collector, having started with stamps at the age of six. In more recent years, he has added beer coasters, Century of Progress post cards, and books on Jewish and English history to his variety of collections. For the past 40 years, his numismatic interests have centered on the very early Roman England and Anglo-Saxon coins of England, through the Commonwealth period. This specialty was advanced by his visits to England and Wales on ten separate occasions.

Visiting Scandinavia a number of times led Saul to expand his numismatic collecting interests even further, to include all coins on which appears the word Jehovah, rendered in Hebrew, from a number of different countries, i.e., Denmark, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, England and the U.S. To date, he has identified over 1100 such coins, none of which have any direct relationship to Judaism. The purpose of the Jehovah coins is quite complex. His studies on these coins have resulted in a book, *The Use of G-d's Name, Jehovah, in Hebrew on Coins, Medals and Jetons*", as well as a number of other articles on the subject.

Saul is one of the founders and a past president of the Israel Numismatic Society of Illinois, a Fellow and past member of The British Numismatic Society, current member of AINA and the ANA, a four-time past president of the Chicago Coin Club, and a past president of the Morton Grove Coin Club, Lake County Coin Club, Northbrook Coin Club, Illinois Numismatic Society and the INS of Brooklyn. He has exhibited at the ANA and won Best of Show at one of the conventions. In his spare time, Saul enjoys doing oil painting.

Written by Donna J. Sims, NLG



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CLEOPATRA, QUEEN OF EGYPT, AND THE JEWS

By Marvin Tameanko

“Not only one man hath risen against us to destroy us, but in every generation have men risen against us to destroy us”:

The Passover Haggadah, Authorized Version, 1611.

The first century rabbis who wrote this verse in the Haggadah not only defined the terrible fate of the Jews but at the same time recorded their past history, stated their present condition, and predicted the future. And judging from the current situation in the Middle East, they saw the future only too clearly. The background story of the Haggadah is set in ancient Egypt around 1,200 BC so it is interesting that a later Egyptian Queen, the famous Cleopatra VII, 51-30 BC, took part in the violence of early anti-Semitism.

Today, everyone knows that Cleopatra was not a ravishing beauty who looked like the Hollywood actress Elizabeth Taylor. Her portrait on her coins shows a determined-looking but not very attractive woman, yet it is recorded that she was the lover and mistress of two of the most powerful and famous Romans, Julius Caesar and Marc Antony. Despite these facts, few people know that Cleopatra had connections to the Jews of the ancient world and strongly influenced their history. So, it is not surprising to find Cleopatra mentioned in the Talmud as having a spirited conversation with the great 2nd century AD Rabbi Meir, the outstanding scholar who was one of the greatest rabbis of his time and a figure mentioned in the Haggadah.

In this mythical and anachronistic dialogue concerning the resurrection of the dead (recorded in the last chapter of Tractate Sanhedrin, 90b), Cleopatra asks Rabbi Meir - ***“when the dead are resurrected, will they come back naked or clothed?”*** The answer given by Rabbi Meir is not really important, but he said that the resurrected would be fully clothed. Cleopatra was chosen by the sages to participate in this discussion with the Rabbi because she was known as an opponent of the Jews and she dressed herself lavishly in royal robes and the exquisite garments of the goddess Isis before committing suicide. For contrast or dramatic effect in a parable, the authors of the Talmud often presented evil people in conversation with saintly characters, and they knew Cleopatra was a cruel and vicious person. In Talmud, Niddah, 30b, they reported that Cleopatra had the stomachs of her executed female slaves cut open and examined for any small items they may have stolen

An Egyptian 80 drachmae bronze coin struck in Alexandria for Cleopatra VII, 51-30 BC. Her young portrait is accompanied by the Greek legend KLEOPATRAS BASILISHS for 'Cleopatra the Queen'. *Greek Coins and Their Values* by David R. Sear, 7955. Coin photo courtesy of the Classical Numismatic Group, CNG



Cleopatra's story has fascinated authors from the day she died until today, and numerous books have been published to describe her life, her motives and actions. Many things are disputed, especially her actual appearance, but she is either maligned as a beautiful, perfidious queen given to sexual excesses or praised as a homely, courageous pharaoh fighting to free her country from the dominance of Rome. The truth may lie somewhere in between these two extremes. Not surprisingly, several Hollywood movies have attempted to dramatize the life of Cleopatra and perhaps the best portrayal of the queen was given by the famous actress, Theda Bara (born Theodosia Goodman), in the 1917 silent film titled 'Cleopatra'.



**Theda Bara as Cleopatra in the 1917 film, 'Cleopatra'.
A Public Domain Photograph.**

The Ptolemaic monarchs of Egypt had a hot and cold relationship with the Jewish people who lived both in Judaea and in the city of Alexandria. The Jews had established communities in Egypt as early as the Babylonian Captivity in 586 BC and they settled in Alexandria when it was founded by Alexander the Great in 332 BC. However, Ptolemy I, king of Egypt, 305-283 BC, and the Syrian monarch, Seleukos I, 312-280 BC, both successors of Alexander, constantly fought over possession of Judaea, the land bridge between their empires. Ptolemy I provoked his Jewish citizens when he invaded Judaea and conquered Jerusalem in 318 BC on a Sabbath when the Jews would not fight. Judaea was the traditional gate to Egypt for northern invaders so the Ptolemies needed to fully control it, and they did until 198 BC when the Seleukid king, Antiochus III took over Judaea. The first Egyptian king's son, Ptolemy II, 285-246 BC, established better relations with the Jews and is famous for engaging 72 Jewish elders to translate the Hebrew Bible into Greek so that the Jews in the diaspora could read it. It was called the 'Septuagint', the 'Seventy', after the number of its authors, and it formed the basis of most modern bibles. Later Egyptian monarchs had good relations with the Jews even employing them as civil servants and generals in their armies. However, the growing influence of the Alexandrian Jews, who were politically allies and lobbyists for their brethren in Judaea, alienated several of the later Ptolemies. The Judaeans and Alexandrian Jewish communities supported Julius Caesar in his war against the Egyptian Pharaoh in Egypt and later supported Marc Antony in his struggles to control the Middle East, but switched their loyalty to Octavian, later Augustus, in 31 BC when Antony and Cleopatra were close to defeat.



A rare denarius struck by a Roman military mint in Alexandria in 34 or 32 BC showing a not-so-beautiful or young Cleopatra on the obverse, titled as the 'Queen of Kings and (Mother) of the Sons of Kings'. The bust of Marc Antony as 'Conqueror of Armenia' appears on the reverse. *The Coinage of the Roman Republic*, by E. A. Sydenham, 1210. Coin photo courtesy of CNG.

Our best source for information about Cleopatra's relationships with the Jews comes from the writings of the Jewish/Roman historian, Flavius Josephus, born in AD 37. Cleopatra VII was the last of the Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt and she was politically cold and then warm but never friendly to the Jews in her kingdom. Despite this, one quarter of the citizens of her capital city, Alexandria, were Jewish and lived in a large municipality close to the royal palace. These Egyptian Jews and the Judaeans became unwilling participants or pawns in Cleopatra's political schemes against the Romans. In 47 BC Julius Caesar, a friend of the Jews, forced Cleopatra to ease restrictions on the Jews in her kingdom and in return, they supported him in his war against Cleopatra's brother, Ptolemy XIV and his allies. The Judaeans, led by Antipater, Herod's father, along with the High Priest Hyrcanus, led a force of Jews into Egypt to help Caesar's army and also convinced Jewish soldiers in the Egyptian army to join the Romans. Cleopatra's ambivalent attitude to the Jews is best illustrated by her disputes with and plots against Herod the Great, 37-4 BC. Josephus, in his book *Antiquities of the Jews*, 14. 14, 2, said that when Herod was defeated by Mattathias Antigonus, the last Hasmonean king, in a civil war he fled to Marc Antony in Egypt where Cleopatra offered him an administrative job and invited him to stay but he continued on to Rome. Ironically, despite her later dislike of the Jews, Cleopatra was a good friend of the last female members of the Hasmonean family, Alexandra and her daughter, the wife of Herod, Mariamne. Probably at that time these Jewish royal women behaved like oriental, decadent queens, more like Cleopatra herself, and less like observant Jews. After Herod was appointed the puppet ruler of Judaea by the Romans, Cleopatra turned on him and plotted with Alexandra, to destroy him. Alexandra wanted her son, Aristobulus, to be appointed as the High Priest of Judaea by the Romans, a position that would make him co-ruler with Herod. This would restore the Hasmonean dynasty to power but Marc Antony refused to interfere in the complicated politics of Judaea and took Herod's side in the dispute. Still, Cleopatra continued to intrigue against Herod and to appease her Antony appointed Aristobulus as the High Priest but held him and Alexandra as prisoners in Jerusalem. Soon after, Aristobulus mysteriously drowned while swimming in a pool at a party given in Herod's palace. (Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 1. 22. 2). Cleopatra claimed that Herod ordered the assassination and wanted him tried for murder but Marc Antony absolved him of any crime. However, by these actions, Cleopatra proved she could manipulate Judaeian politics and interfere in the daily lives of the Jews, even against the wishes of Marc Antony.



A 23 millimeter bronze coin struck for Cleopatra VII and Marc Antony in 32-31 BC at a mint in Chalcis, Coele-Syria. *Roman Provincial Coinage*, (cited as RPC) Vol. 1, 4771. Coin photo courtesy of CNG

In 34 BC, Cleopatra prevailed on Antony to give her some of the Roman eastern territories including Cyrenaica (Lybia), the entire coastal area of Judaea and Phoenicia, except for Tyre and Sidon, and the agricultural region around Jericho where the world famous balsam incense was produced. Cleopatra traveled to her new possessions in Judaea and Herod was required by the Romans to entertain her and receive her with rich gifts. When she arrived, Herod convinced her to rent him the estates around Jericho so that he could continue to control the trade in balsam, a highly remunerative industry. (Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, 14. 5. 4). Eventually, this agreement did not satisfy Cleopatra's greed and through political machinations, she fomented a war between Herod and the Nabatean (Arab) King Malichus. When Herod seemed to be winning the war, she sent one of her generals to help the Nabateans continue the conflict. In 31 BC the Nabateans were victorious and the Jews retreated across the Jordan River. (Josephus, *The Wars of The Jews*, 1. 19. 2).



A rare bronze coin 20 millimeters in diameter, struck in the city of Orthosia, Phoenicia in 36/35 BC for Cleopatra VII after she was awarded the region by Marc Antony. RPC Vol. 1, 4501. Coin photo courtesy of CNG.

When Octavian, later called Augustus, defeated Marc Antony and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium in Greece in 31 BC and captured Alexandria in 30 BC, a panic stricken Cleopatra looked for a scapegoat. She conceived of the evil plan to blame the Jews and to murder all the Jewish men women and children in Alexandria, even with her own hands. (Josephus, *Against Apion*, Book 2. 5, 60). This may be one of the first historical examples of a monarch making innocent Jews responsible for a military defeat. Fortunately, Cleopatra committed suicide before this genocide could be carried out and the Jewish community in Egypt survived until 1948 when they were driven out after the founding of the State of Israel. And so, after 2,500 years, the Egyptian Jews returned, perhaps reluctantly, to their ancestral homeland.

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Board of Supervisors of Alameda County, California Issues Commendation Honoring the 40th Anniversary of The Jewish-American Hall of Fame

On June 15th, Gail Steele, Supervisor of the Second District of Alameda County, California, presented a Commendation from the County of Alameda to Mel Wacks, Founding Director of the non-profit Jewish-American Hall of Fame, to commemorate its 40th anniversary.

The Commendation notes "in its more than 30 years association [1969-2001], it raised \$171,045 for the Magnes Museum." In addition, "over 20,000 Jewish-American Hall of Fame medals have been acquired by individuals, synagogues and museums around the world ... ambassadors of good will that will not decay or disappear with time."

The document continues by observing that "The Jewish-American Hall of Fame, through its award winning web site www.amuseum.org/jahf, routinely attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, many of them students from Alameda County, as well as throughout the United States and around the world. [It issues] the longest series of art medals being produced in the United States [that is] considered to be one of the most important series of medals in recent years (Catalog of the XXII Congress of the Fédération Internationale de la Médaille, Helsinki)."

The Commendation concludes: "Therefore, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors ... does commend The Jewish-American Hall of Fame for its forty years of promoting unique and accomplished Jewish Americans and sharing their life history with Alameda County residents, and express great appreciation to its founder and director, Mel Wacks, for making the County of Alameda [home of the Magnes Museum], a better place in which to live ..."



Mel Wacks, Gail Steele, Alameda County Supervisor, Second District; and Seymour Fromer, Director Emeritus, Magnes Museum.

KING SOLOMON

Before King David dies, he appoints as king his son Solomon, who is 12 years old at the time, with these words:

"I go the way of all the earth. You shall be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man, and keep the charge of the Lord your God to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes and His commandments and His testimonies. As it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn." (1 King 2:2-3)

This classic blessing is often quoted by fathers to their sons on the day of their Bar Mitzvah. It restates the cardinal rule that has guided the Jewish people from the time of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai: in order to prosper keep the Torah. Shortly after Solomon is anointed king, God appears to him in a dream in which He invites Solomon to make a request for himself. Solomon answers:

"I am but a small child ... Give therefore your servant an understanding heart to judge your people..."

His request pleases God who tells him:

"Because you have not requested riches and honor but only that which would benefit all the people, I will give you not only an understanding heart like none other before or after you ... but also riches and honor like no other king in your days." (1 Kings 3:7-13)

Born in 848 BCE, Solomon dies at age 52 in 796 BCE, ruling as king for 40 years -- the best years in all of Israel's history -- 40 years of peace and prosperity. He is known as *chacham mi'kol ha'adam*, "wisest of all the men." The Bible relates that kings from all over the world came to hear his wisdom, which included not only Torah wisdom, but also wisdom in secular knowledge and science.

His fame spread through all the surrounding nations. He composed 3,000 parables, and 1,005 poems. He discoursed about trees, from the cedars of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows from the wall. He also discoursed about animals, birds, creeping things and fish. Men of all nations came to hear Solomon's wisdom, as did all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom. (1 Kings 5:11-14)

The crowning achievement of Solomon's reign is the building of the Temple which his father, King David, had dreamt about. King David brought the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem's Mount Moriah -- "the gate of heaven" -- but because he had been a warrior who had blood on his hands, he was not permitted by God to erect the Temple. However, this is left for his son to accomplish, which he does.

The Bible devotes several chapters (II Kings 5-7) to the construction of this most important building to the nation of Israel -- the place of communion between the Jewish people and God. It tells that the entire Temple both inside and outside, including floors and doors were overlaid with gold. Besides this there were bronze structures such as columns, an immersion tank, and basins. The magnificent structure took seven years to build.

When it is finished, Solomon dedicates the Temple:

"Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built? Yet have regard for the prayer of Your servant, and for his supplication, O Lord my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer, which Your servant prays before You today; that Your eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which You have said, 'My name shall be there,' that You may listen to the prayer ... of your people Israel ..." (1 Kings 8:27-29)

This is the pinnacle of Jewish history. Everyone is united. Their neighbors don't bother the Jews -- in fact, they come to learn from the Jews. There is peace and prosperity. This is as good as it gets for Israel--the closest ancient Israel gets to achieving the Messianic ideal of creating an ideal nation that is alight to the nations. This is the zenith. So why doesn't this golden age last?

Solomon makes one serious mistake. In violation of the Torah's prohibition He takes too many wives. In fact, he has 700 wives and 300 concubines. If we go back to the Book of Deuteronomy where the idea that Jews would one day want a king is first discussed, Moses warns that the king should not have too many horses or too many wives (Deut. 17:17). The great Torah commentator Rashi tells us that this means no more than 18, and that King David had only six. The Torah placed limits on the number of wives and wealth the king could have so that he would stay focused on his responsibilities and not be distracted and corrupted by materialism and power. Solomon was certainly aware of these prohibitions, but felt that his great wisdom and spirituality would enable to handle these challenges and be an even greater king. Unfortunately, he did not foresee the problems that some of his many foreign wives would cause.

The first question is why did Solomon "need" so many wives? The answer has nothing to do with love. Throughout history the overwhelming reason for marriage amongst nobility and royalty was to create political alliances. The Middle East in Solomon's time is made up of many city-states and all the kings of these city-states want to send their daughters to marry King Solomon and in this way form an alliance with him. Solomon

may also have had an additional reason-his marriages to these foreign wives were his way of bringing these nations closer to God.

King Solomon married Gentile women? Obviously not. Before they married the king they had to convert to Judaism. But that leads to another question. The Talmud states:

We (the Jewish people) will not accept converts in the Messianic Era, similarly, they did not accept converts, neither during the time of [King] David, nor during the time of [King] Solomon. (Avodah Zarah 3b)

The motivation to convert should come solely out of a love of truth and a sincere desire to join the Jewish People despite the tremendous obligations that a Jewish lifestyle entails and the external dangers that the Jewish People have always faced. In short-the prospective convert must demonstrate total commitment in spite of any difficulties or danger. The past reign's of David and Solomon and especially the future Messianic Era are unique, idyllic periods when the Jewish people enjoy peace, prosperity and a unique leadership role amongst the nations. During these periods there were (and will be) many people who wished to join the Jewish People, not out a desire for truth, but rather for benefit. Such insincere conversions were not accepted, and will not be accepted in the future.

So how did King Solomon marry foreign women? The answer is that an exception was made for the future wives of the king and a special court was set up to handle their conversions. Since many of these weddings were arranged for political reasons it is certain that some of the conversion were not entirely sincere nor did all Solomon's wives completely abandon their idolatrous practices.

As with Moses and David, we again see the incredible level of accountability that these great leaders are held to. For a wife of King Solomon, prophet, wisest of all men, King of Israel, to worship idols is an inexcusable mistake that Solomon is held directly accountable for. *In his old age, his wives turned away Solomon's heart after other gods. (1 Kings 11:4-5).*

One of the greatest leaders of the Jewish people, a man on his spiritual level -- who wrote the Song of Songs, the Book of Ecclesiastes, and the Book of Proverbs -- must be suffering eternal pain in heaven knowing what has been written about him in the Bible. Not only is criticism of Solomon harsh, but as with other great Jewish leaders, so are the consequences of his mistakes. The Bible ends Solomon's story relating that God was angry with him and told him:

"Since you are guilty of this, and you have not kept My covenant and My laws ... I will tear the kingdom away from you But I will not do

this in your time, for the sake of your father David. Instead, I will tear it away from your son ... I will give your son one tribe for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen." (1 Kings 11:9-13)

It is clear from this how much God loved King David and how completely He had forgiven him for his faults. It is also clear that hard times are coming for the Jewish people as the kingdom of Israel is about to be torn in half.

In my collection of Palestine Bank share certificates there is but one, serial number one. It is of the King Solomon Bank in Jerusalem. It was issued in March, 1933, bought by an Arab, El Khor Siricus el Kohori who evidently had faith in a Jewish Bank with the name King Solomon. Alas, the bank failed three years later.

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בנק המלך שלמון המלך
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SERIAL No. 1



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Pay to *El Khor Siricus el Kohori*

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2. The Bank hereby charges with such payments its undertakings and the whole of its assets, whatsoever and whosoever, present and future.

3. This debenture is issued subject to and with the benefit of the conditions indorsed hereon, which are to be deemed part of it.

1. אגרת חוב של 30,000 לא"י. כל אגרת חוב (אובליגציה) היא על סך לא"י אחת. כל האובליגציות שוות בכוחן ונחשבות לראשונות במדרג.

2. הבנק hereby charges with such payments its undertakings and the whole of its assets, whatsoever and whosoever, present and future.

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Given under the Common Seal of the Bank this *31. March 1933* ביום 31. מרץ 1933

Director: *El Khor Siricus el Kohori* המנהלים: *El Khor Siricus el Kohori*

מנהל: *El Khor Siricus el Kohori*

Wooden Shekels Issued to Celebrate 40th Anniversary of The Jewish-American Hall of Fame

The first numismatic project embarked upon by Mel Wacks, as Numismatic Consultant to the Magnes Museum, was the issuance of wooden shekels in 1968. The success of this issue helped to raise funds that allowed for the launching of The Jewish-American Hall of Fame series of medals in the following year. Today, this is the longest continuing series of art medals in the United States.

A limited edition of 500 wooden shekels celebrates the 40th Anniversary of The Jewish-American Hall of Fame. The obverse is identical to the 1968 issue except for the date. It features a chalice, as it appeared on silver shekels issued during the First Revolt of Judaea against the Romans from 66-70 C.E. Above the beaded rim of the chalice is the date "2009" and below are the initials "MW" of designer Mel Wacks. Around the circumference is the inscription "WOODEN SHEKEL" in English and ancient Hebrew.

The reverse design features the back of the first Jewish-American Hall of Fame medal – a quote by Rabbi Judah L. Magnes made to the students of Hebrew University: "SEEK TRUTH WITHOUT FEAR." The monogram "VR" of the medalist Victor Ries is below. It should be noted that Ries celebrated his 101st birthday last year. The surrounding inscriptions read "JEWISH-AMERICAN HALL OF FAME" and the award-winning web site "WWW.AMUSEUM.ORG/JAHF," that welcomes over a million visitors a year.

The new wooden shekel is available for a contribution of \$2 each to the non-profit Jewish-American Hall of Fame, c/o Mel Wacks, 5189 Jeffdale Ave., Woodland Hills, CA 91364.



The Holocaust in Macedonia

Deportation of Monastir Jewry

Although Jews had lived in Monastir from Roman times, the Sephardic Jews, who originally migrated from the Iberian Peninsula in the fifteenth century, became the predominant group in the town by the sixteenth century. They maintained a highly traditional and distinctive lifestyle characterized by residence in a Jewish quarter, attachment to the Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) language and Sephardic folklore, commitment to Jewish religious observance, and allegiance to Jewish communal institutions including synagogues, religious schools, religious courts, and mutual aid societies.

In 1863, after a fire destroyed much of the Jewish quarter, the community turned to the Jewish world's leading philanthropist, England's Sir Moses Montefiore, for assistance in reconstruction. This appeal to the West marked the beginning of the Sephardic community's reorientation toward European culture and the gradual introduction of secular education and values into the population. These changes took place at the same time as new transportation links to Salonika expanded trade and brought economic prosperity to the Monastir Jewish community.

This period of cultural and economic development was cut short by political upheavals in the region, beginning in 1903 with the Macedonian rebellion against the Turkish rulers of the Ottoman Empire. Ethnic violence among Greeks, Serbs, and Bulgarians over the future of Macedonia exposed Monastir to political violence and economic disruption throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. As a result, thousands of Jewish Monastirlis (as the locals referred to themselves) emigrated to North and South America, Jerusalem, and the Sephardic metropolis of Salonika.

After the end of the Second Balkan War in 1913, formerly Ottoman Macedonia was carved up among Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece. Monastir, then renamed Bitola, was in the territory incorporated by Serbia. However, the Jewish community continued to call the city by the name it bore during centuries of Ottoman rule: Monastir.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Monastir's Jewish population reached nearly 11,000, but by 1914 years of emigration had reduced the community to just over 6,000. During World War I, Monastir suffered two invasions and two years of bombardment. More than 5,000 Monastir Jews fled their homes and lived as refugees in the surrounding area. When the war was over, Monastir's Jews numbered just over 3,000.

Bitola became part of the new state of Yugoslavia, and in the 1920s and 1930s Zionism emerged as the dominant force among the local Jewish youth. During those years, 500 of these young men and women emigrated to Palestine

In 1941, some 78,000 Jews lived in Yugoslavia, including about 4,000 foreign or stateless Jews who had found refuge in the country during the 1930s. Although Yugoslavia had reluctantly joined the Axis alliance with Germany, the Yugoslav government was toppled by an anti-German military coup on March 27, 1941. Nazi Germany invaded the Balkan nations of Yugoslavia and Greece in early April 1941. Supported militarily by her Axis allies Germany quickly subdued the Balkans. Yugoslavia was partitioned among the Axis allies. Bulgaria annexed Yugoslav Macedonia the area including the cities of Skopje and Bitola in southern Yugoslavia.

On October 4, 1941, the Bulgarians enforced an extraordinary measure that prohibited the Jews of Macedonia from engaging in any type of industry or commerce. All existing Jewish businesses had three months to transfer ownership to non-Jews or sell their assets and close down. In addition, a law that barred Jews from certain areas of town was enforced in Monastir in late 1941. Jews who lived in the more prosperous part of Monastir, located on the east side of the Dragor River, were forced to move to a poorer part of town located near the traditional Jewish quarter on the west side, and this area became the ghetto.

With Monastir's Jews forced into a ghetto and registered, it became easier to carry out the theft of their property. On July 2, 1942, the Bulgarian government demanded that all Jewish households hand over 20 percent of the value of all assets, including property, furniture, cash, and household items. Committees were established to assess the value of the Jews' property. The possessions of those who did not have the money to pay the tax were sold at auction.

All of these degrading, restrictive measures halted normal Jewish life in Monastir. Though allied with the Germans, the Bulgarian government refused to deport Jews residing in Bulgaria proper. Bulgarian authorities did, however, deport Jews without Bulgarian citizenship from the territories of Yugoslavia and Greece which Bulgaria occupied. They deported the Macedonian Jews in simultaneous actions that began in the early morning of Thursday, March 11, 1943.

In Monastir, Skopje, and Štip, where there was a tiny population of Sephardic Jews, several hundred police and soldiers, as well as cart drivers with their carts, gathered at municipal police stations at 2 a.m. to

receive instructions for the removal of the Jews and their belongings. In Monastir, the Bulgarian military established a blockade around the city to prevent escapes.

Between 5 and 6 a.m., groups fanned out into the ghetto to bang on doors and order the residents to leave their homes in one hour. The Jews were told that they were being transferred to other parts of Bulgaria and that after the war they would be returned to their homes, but this did little to ease the terror and confusion of this massive eviction. At 7 a.m. the Jews were forced to walk to the railroad station, where a train was waiting to take them away to neighboring Skopje where a temporary detention center had been established at the state tobacco monopoly warehouse known as Monopol. The Monopol was chosen for its ability to hold thousands of people, and also because it was served by a railroad.

On the morning of March 22, 1943, some 2,300 Macedonian Jews from Monopol were forced to board a train consisting of 40 cattle cars. Families journeyed together, and the transport included at least 134 small children no more than four years old, and at least 194 children between the ages of four and 10. The train arrived at Treblinka six days later on March 28 at 7 a.m. Four people died on this transport. The overwhelming majority of these Jews were from Skopje.

On March 25, German and Bulgarian soldiers loaded about 2,400 Macedonian Jews onto a train made up of freight cars. All the Jews from Štip, who numbered 551, were on this second transport, as were about 2,000 Jews from Skopje and Monastir. The people came out of the building carrying their belongings on their backs. Everyone was carrying things, from the oldest person to the youngest. With bowed heads, all approached the black train. In front of each wagon stood a German and a Bulgarian policeman checking off a list. It was impossible to sit down in the freight cars. As soon as the 'livestock' had been loaded into a car, it was locked and sealed. Only heads were visible through the small windows,

The last train carried around 2,400 Jews, approximately 2,300 of whom were from Monastir. The Jews began boarding the freight cars at 6 a.m. on March 29 and by noon the train was full. The departure of this train for the killing center at Treblinka signaled the final destruction of the Monastir Jewish community.

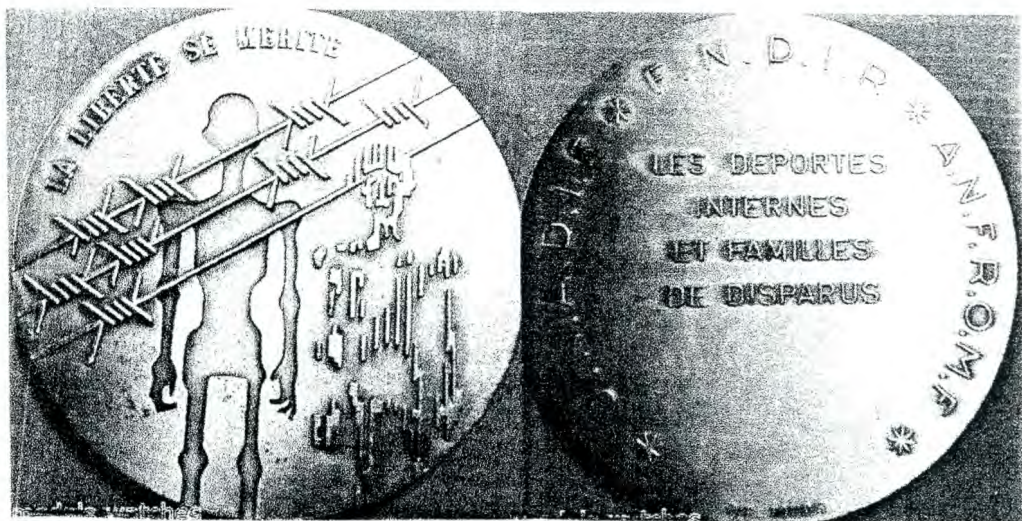
Photographs of nearly every Jewish adult in Monastir, more than half the community, were collected by the Bulgarian authorities in the first half of 1942. Though many of the Jewish inhabitants of eastern Europe were required to submit photographs for purposes of police

registration, work permits, and ration cards both inside and outside ghettos established by Germany or its Axis allies, few of these photograph collections survived the war intact. The Monastir registration photographs constitute one of these rare collections

The origins of the Monastir photograph collection lay in the directive given by the Bulgarian occupation authorities in early 1942 to the Jews of Monastir, then recently concentrated in a ghetto, to submit photographs of all family members above the age of 13. While some of the submitted photos were newly taken for this purpose, others were older family snapshots dating from the 1890s to the early 1940s. Most of the photographs are head shots of individual adults, but some are group portraits of two, three, or more family members.

Apparently, these photographs were reproduced by the Bulgarian authorities; one complete set now exists at the Macedonian State Archives, captioned in the 1950s, while another set was cut and pasted into police register books produced by the Bulgarian authorities in 1942. These police registers were recovered after the war and turned over to the Union of Jewish Communities of Yugoslavia. Years later they were donated to Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, but not before a large percentage of the photos were removed by survivors.

Your editor was unable to find a numismatic item that pertains to Monastir Jewry. In France, around 1950 a scarce bronze medal was struck in Honor of the Deportees and Families of Disappeared Holocaust.



JEWISH HISTORY IN BEIRUT

Beirut was a city in Syria until Lebanon was created after World War II. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth century Jews of Spanish and Italian origin settled there for trading reasons. Whenever possible, they kept their European nationality in order to be under the jurisdiction of the consular courts under the Ottoman Capitulations, rather than being treated as *dhimmis* under Islamic law.

There have been Jews in Syria since the time of King David, and certainly since early Roman times. Jews from this ancient community were known as Musta'arabim (Arabized Jews) or Moriscos to the Sephardim. Many Sephardim arrived following the expulsion from Spain in 1492, and quickly took a leading position in the community.

Beirut was in the hands of Crusader lords from 1110 to 1291. Soon after, Beirut successfully broke Akko's monopoly on Syrian maritime trade and for a few years supplanted it as the main trading center in the region. After Ibrahim Basha captured Akko in 1832, the city of Beirut began living its early modern revival. In 1888 Beirut became the capital of the vilayet in Syria.

Still later, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, some Jews from Italy and elsewhere, known as Señores Francos, settled in Beirut for trading reasons, while retaining their European nationalities. There is no clear distinction between these groups, as they have intermarried extensively, and all regard themselves as Sephardim. It is said that one can tell families of Spanish descent (in the narrow sense) by the fact that they light an extra Hanukkah candle. This custom was apparently established in gratitude for their acceptance by the more native Syrian based community.

During the nineteenth century the Jews were several times made the victims of calumnies, the gravest being those of 1840 and 1860, in the reign of the sultan Abdülmecit. That of 1840, commonly known as the Damascus affair, was an accusation of ritual murder brought against the Jews in connection with the death of Father Thomas. The second accusation brought against the Jews, in 1860, was that of having taken part in the massacre of the Christians by the Druze and the Muslims. Five hundred Muslims, who had been involved in the affair, were hanged by the grand vizier Fuad Pasha. Two hundred Jews were awaiting the same fate, in spite of their innocence, and the whole Jewish

community was fined 4,000,000 piastres. The condemned Jews were saved only by the official intervention of the Prussian consul, Dr. Wetzstein, of Sir Moses Montefiore of London, and of the bankers Abraham Salomon Camondo of Constantinople and Shemaya Angel.

The first to open a Jewish school in Beirut upon modern European methods was Hakam Zaki Cohen. A school for girls was established in 1878, and was taken over by the Alliance Israélite Universelle. There were two benevolent societies at Beirut: the Bikkur-Holim, founded in 1890 for assisting the sick and poor; and the Misgab-Laddak, founded in 1896 for placing youths in apprenticeship. In the Midrash Stambuli there is a room set apart for study, the yeshibah, where old men and pious Jews met daily to read from the Zohar, the Talmud, etc. The Jewish population in 1901 was 5000.

After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following World War I, Beirut, along with all of Lebanon was placed under the French Mandate. Lebanon achieved independence in 1943, and Beirut became its capital city. The city today is one of the most diverse of the Middle East being divided between Christians (Maronites, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Armenian Catholics, Roman Catholic, and Protestants, and Muslims (Sunni and Shi'ite) as well as a minority of Druze. Most of the Jews of Beirut emigrated to the USA when the war started in 1975 and now predominately live in Brooklyn, New York.

It appears that many Jews in Beirut were impoverished and appeals for their existence were sent out to the Jewish Diaspora. The illustration is of a Beirut Jewish token dated in the Hebrew Calendar 5664 which equals the year 1904. It is considered to be a charity token given to impoverished Jews and was accepted as currency.



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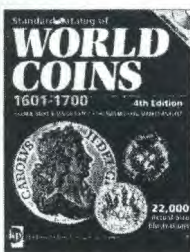
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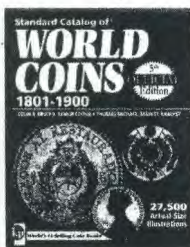
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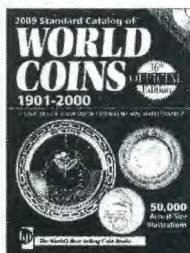
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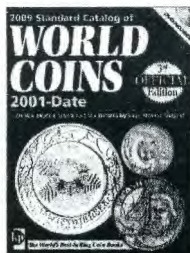
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MASADA



After the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Second Temple, the Masada garrison, the last remnant of Jewish rule in the Land of Israel, refused to surrender and was besieged by the Roman Tenth Legion Fretensis under Flavius Silva. Masada's unequalled defensive site baffled even the Romans' highly developed siege system, for a time. It took the Roman army of almost 15,000, fighting a defending force of less than 1,000, including women and children, almost two years to subdue the fortress. The Romans built a sloping ramp of earth and stones to bring their soldiers within reach of the stronghold. The Zealots, preferring death rather than enslavement, committed suicide, led by Eleazar ben Yair (April 15, CE 73). Only two women and five children, who had hidden water in a conduit, survived to tell the story, which has turned Masada into a symbol of humanity's continuous struggle for freedom from oppression.

Masada was briefly reoccupied by the Jews in the 2nd century CE and was the site of a Byzantine church in the 5th to 6th century. Thereafter, it was abandoned until the 20th century, except for a brief interval during the Crusades; the Arabs called the mountain As-Sabba ("The Accursed").

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